

California Students, Educators Unite to Protect Education from Kindergarten to PHD

On second stop of statewide tour, leaders representing K-12 through higher education say \$5B+ in proposed state budget cuts spell disaster for California's economy, future

LOS ANGELES – Lt. Governor John Garamendi and California education leaders representing nearly 10 million students, educators, and educational staff, today united in a call to protect California students from \$5 billion in proposed state budget cuts for education. At a Los Angeles City College forum, representatives from California's K-12 schools, California Community Colleges, California State University and the University of California said the Governor and Legislature must protect California's future by funding educational investment in California's students. "California is at grave risk of leaving our children behind by underfunding their education and shifting to them and their families an increasing share of the cost of education," said Lt. Governor John Garamendi, "Our state and its people cannot prosper in the 21st Century if we force our schools to live on a fiscal starvation diet."

The group of K-12 and higher education organizations launched their effort on Friday at Sacramento City College, decrying the proposed \$5 billion in education cuts in a joint letter to the Governor and legislators. Organizations joining the call to action include: California Federation of Teachers, California Teachers Association, California School Employees Association, University of California, California State University, California Community Colleges, California Faculty Association, Community College League of California, Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, California State Student Association, University of California Student Association, Student Senate for California Community Colleges, and Association of California School Administrators.

The proposed budget cuts will decimate California's educational system, cutting \$4.8 billion from K-12 and Community College classrooms and another \$644.8 million from UC and CSU campuses. These cuts will slash \$800 per K-12 student, shift a great portion of the state's obligation to fund higher education to students and families, and could mean the doors of our colleges are closed to tens of thousands of students who have earned the right to affordable public higher education. At a time when our state faces more challenges than ever – an increasingly complex world, an increasingly competitive global economy, and an environment increasingly threatened by global climate change – California cannot afford to cut back on those investments which have made our state strong and which will propel our economy into the future.

"The governor's budget proposal is a giant step backward for public education at every level in California—preschool through higher education," said David Sanchez, president of the 340,000-member California Teachers Association. "Cuts of this magnitude are equivalent to laying off 107,000 teachers, or increasing the number of students in every classroom by up to 35 percent in K-12. They mean faculty layoffs, a 10 percent hike in student fees—their sixth in the last seven years— and reductions in course offerings in our colleges and universities. Our students didn't create this budget crisis, and their education shouldn't be ransomed to solve it."

“California ranks 46th in the country in per-pupil spending. Our community colleges rank 45th. The governor's proposed cuts would send California's students straight to the bottom. There is an alternative: close tax loopholes and increase state revenues through fair tax policies. In the richest state in the richest country in the world, we do have the money. It's just in the wrong pockets,” Carl Friedlander, President, California Federation of Teachers, Community College Council

“The governor's proposed suspension of the Proposition 98 minimum funding guarantee for community colleges will force an exodus of talented professors and support staff, make it more difficult for California to produce the workforce demanded by our state's industries, and put additional pressure on an infrastructure that is already strained,” said Michael Bilbrey, second vice president of the California School Employees Association and bookstore coordinator for Citrus Community College in Glendora. “Without adequate and reliable investment in public education, California cannot lead the nation in grappling with the problems and opportunities of the future.”

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